Soviet Russia's Campaign to Strengthen Communist Principles

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ASIDE from the dramatic trial of the Donetz mining engineers which has figured so prominently in the news dispatches to the foreign press, recent events in Russia have been of little significance considered as isolated happenings; they acquire meaning, however, when taken in relation to each other and to the Donetz trial, which has held the centre of the Russian stage. Viewed as indications of the trend of policy under Stalin's leadership, they afford convincing proof that the Soviet Government has no present intention of surrendering its Communist principles. On the contrary, the events of the past few weeks seem to have been directed, as far as conscious direction was possible, with the purpose of arousing renewed zeal and devotion to the faith within the rank and file of the party.

The Russian press has recorded briefly, and without comment, numerous executions of *Kulaki* [rich peasants] accused of obstructing grain requisitions in the villages, or of being concerned in the assassination of Soviet agents. There is little evidence that the obstructionist tactics pursued by these middle-class peasants who feel the crushing effect of Communist policy have reached the dimensions of open revolt. As yet the rebellion has been scattered and sporadic, rather an indication of individual desperation than of class conspiracy. Even so, it is not regarded lightly by the Soviet authorities. Bukharin's speech of May 15 promising ruthless extermination of all *Kulaki* guilty of active opposition was followed on June 2 by Stalin's bitter attack upon the members of the party who counselled moderation in the treatment of this peasant group. Both Commissars made a direct charge that the middle peasantry were dangerous potential enemies of the Communist régime, whose existence as a class must be destroyed. Though they expect to employ severe punitive measures in cases of open revolt, the Soviet authorities rely upon projects of economic reorganization for the final removal of this new-born capitalist group; destructive taxes, harassing regulations, favoritism to the "proletarian" peasants, are calculated to make its position economically unsupportable. At the same time vast projects for collective farming under State management—the so-called "grain factories"—are to provide a new economic form for agriculture which will turn the agrarian population into a wage-earning class, similar in their life conditions to the proletarians of the cities, in whom the vitality of the Communist faith inheres. These complementary phases of policy, announced earlier in the year and restated by Bukharin and Stalin in the speeches mentioned above, were pressed forward during the month of June.

Of similar significance as disclosing unqualified adherence to doctrinaire agrarian policy was the disbanding of the Pan-Soviet Congress of Collective Agriculturalists by the Russian Government on June 5. Much importance had been attached to this Congress during its formative stages. Composed of delegates from the principal sections of the Soviet Union—the Ukraine, the Caucasus, White Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmanistan, as well as Russia Proper—it promised to serve as a medium for the unification of policy over the 7,000,000 square miles of territory comprised in the Soviet Federation. Chosen to represent those involved in the new economic system of agriculture, these delegates were expected to respond sympathetically to the policies of the Government. Yet so refractory was the attitude of the Congress that its initial meeting set for June 1 was postponed. When called together a week later under orders to abstain from criticism and devote their energies solely to perfecting the means

for carrying out the Government's policy, the 400 delegates persisted in their demands for a relaxation of State control. Whereupon, the Congress was summarily disbanded. The *Izvestiya* attributed the failure of the Congress to faulty composition; but the incident is evidence both of the determination of the Soviet authorities and of the resistance which their policy evokes over a wide area.

Official reports on the progress of the grain crops have been confusing and, to a degree, self-contradictory during the past few weeks. Crop statistics are dull matter to the average reader; but with regard to Russia they outweigh in importance all other items of information combined. In them is compressed a record of the success or failure of Soviet policy, an index to the economic welfare of Russia's 140,000,000 people, a forecast of the future of the great Communist experiment, for there is no department of Russia's economic life whose vitality is not drawn from the power of the farms to provide a surplus of food for the industrial population and for export. During the Spring months pessimistic crop estimates aroused evident uneasiness in official circles, where a failure of the grain supply is recognized as a premonition of the downfall of the present régime. On June 4 Stalin, admitting the virtual disappearance of the export surplus, explained the situation as the inevitable outcome of the system of small peasant proprietorship, which has increased consumption on the farm to six-sevenths of the entire crop as compared with one-half before the war. A news dispatch from Warsaw on June 10 described the situation as so grave that Stalin had taken steps to create a triumvirate composed of Kamenev, Zinoviev—leaders of the opposition—and himself, to be endowed with dictatorial powers to grapple with the problem. Though this statement was not confirmed from official sources, subsequent pronouncements by Soviet authorities, especially that of M. Chubar, President of the Ukrainian Council of Commissars, likening existing conditions to those of the famine year of 1921, emphasized the gravity of the situation. Then, on June 16, these gloomy predictions were dismissed by the Soviet Statistical Bureau in a statement which asserted that this year's harvest is "on the whole 12 per cent. above the average." This sudden reversal of attitude, though partially explained by the favorable weather of May and June, does not harmonize with the known fact that grain collections have suffered a sharp and progressive decline during the past three months. No final conclusion on this important subject can be drawn until further information is available; but it seems safe to infer that the crisis is not yet past.

These occurrences in agriculture have been given first place in this survey of current developments in Russia because of the overwhelming importance of agrarian economy in the social system of that country. As stated above, the attention of the outside world has been focused upon another matter—the dramatic and colorful trial of the Donetz mining engineers. The Donetz basin comprises the richest of Russia's coal resources. For many years it has been apparent that things were going badly with this important industry. Production figures were declining, costs were rising, and the mines were visited by a succession of calamities which destroyed life and capital equipment. The outside world accepted all this as a matter of course—the inevitable consequences of Socialist inefficiency. In 1926 representatives of the American firm of consulting engineers, Stuart, James and Cook, called in as experts to direct the reorganization of the industry, encountered a mysterious and undefinable opposition which largely nullified their efforts. Suspicions regarding the good faith of the administrators of the mine properties had been gradually spreading, when suddenly the Russian world was electrified by the wholesale arrest of the mining officials, both big and little. On May 18, 53 prisoners, three of them German citizens, were placed on trial charged with deliberate sabotage, an offense whose extreme form is punishable by death under Russian law. Some of the prisoners confessed their guilt, revealing with much circumstantial detail that for years they had been bribed by an organization of the former mine owners, with headquarters in Paris, to wreck the administration of the mines. The purpose behind the plot, according to these confessions, was so completely to discredit State operation that the mines might be allowed

to revert to private ownership. After six weeks of colorful history the trial was concluded in the early morning of July 6. Eleven death sentences were decreed by the court, but with the recommendation that six of these be commuted, on the ground that they had aided the prosecution. All three of the German citizens were freed, two by acquittal and one virtually on parole. Of the other Russians a few were paroled, but thirty-eight of them were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment ranging from one to ten years. The five who faced the death penalty were: Budney, Krishanovsky, Gorlietsky, Yusevich and Boyarinov, who were executed on July 10. The six recommended to clemency were: Beresovsky, Matov, Kasarimov, Boyarchinov, Shadlun and Brantanovsky. Among those condemned to prison were M. Rabinovich and M. Kuzma, two of Russia's greatest engineers.

The tense interest with which the trial has been followed by the people of Russia and the outside world may be attributed in part to its international bearings. The charges against the prisoners implied a suggestion of the connivance of France. Germany, too, was interested officially by reason of the fact that three of her citizens were fighting for their lives at the bar of proletarian justice. But these aspects of the matter, though emphasized by the secrecy of the sessions in camera reserved for their consideration, only partially account for the intensity of feeling provoked by the trial. There is every evidence that the spectacle was dressed up by the Soviet authorities with an eye to its histrionic effect. The arrangements for broadcasting the testimony of witnesses and prisoners, the abundant supply of facilities for press correspondents, the photographic record of dramatic incidents, the theatrical demeanor of the officials, have combined to bestow upon the event the character of propaganda. Through the trial the leaders of Russia have served notice upon their own people and the outside world that they are not wanting in vigilance nor slow to take action in defense of the principles of Lenin.

These evidences of renewed Communist zeal are supported by other recent occurrences. After a careful campaign of publicity through *Pravda*, official organ of the Communist Party, the Central Executive Committee of the Russian Government announced on June 3 a thorough and comprehensive overhauling of the entire bureaucracy, promising ruthless elimination of all place holders weak in the Communist faith. This announcement was broadcast throughout Russia as an appeal for cooperation to all party members. Coincidentally the Communist International gave to the world a new draft program of action which reaffirmed its faith in Communist fundamentals—violent revolution, temporary proletarian dictatorship, eventual transition from State Socialism to pure Communism—and declared uncompromising warfare on all moderate Socialist factions. Within Russia a select group of aggressive party members has been constituted a new department for Communist work in the countryside charged with the evangelization of the apathetic peasantry.

Nor has the religious life of the country been overlooked. By conviction atheists, the rulers of Soviet Russia have heretofore attempted to weaken the hold of the Church upon the masses of the population, not by futile direct assault upon that firmly entrenched institution, but by the more subtle method of dividing the orthodox priesthood into warring factions and encouraging the growth of non-conformist movements. These methods, coupled with complete separation of Church and State and legal subordination of the priesthood to the congregation, have destroyed the political power of the Church. But its spiritual influence has remained; and against this the leaders of the Communist Party have now launched a semi-religious movement among their own followers. Loyal members, especially of the younger generation, are urged to take vows of temperance in the use of liquor, and to pledge themselves to austerity in sex conduct and to abstention from impure and profane speech, as an offset to the growing influence of the church societies in the lives of young people. A tightening of the divorce laws and an increased severity of punishment for crimes inspired by jealousy give official support to these efforts to improve the moral character of the party. A new decree of June 16, while reaffirming religious freedom in purely devotional matters, hampers the work of the churches

among young people by forbidding Sunday Schools and literary and musical societies.

In foreign relations, little has happened to change Russia's previous position. The tension between Russia and Poland created last year by the assassination in Warsaw of Voikov, Soviet Plenipotentiary Representative, and increased by the attempt last May upon the life of Lizarev, trade delegate to the Soviet Union, is still the subject of diplomatic correspondence. The Russian Government, however, has given assurance within the month of its firm intention to respect the sovereignty and independence of all the new Baltic States, including Poland. Negotiations with Greece over a commercial treaty, which broke down in May, have not yet been revived, and these two countries remain still without official commercial relations. New evidence of Great Britain's animosity is shown in the aggressive police campaign against Communism in Egypt and the repeated charges of trouble making by Soviet agents in India. Perhaps the most significant event of the month from the standpoint of Anglo-Russian relations has been the conclusion of treaties uniting Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan in an alliance of amity. This alliance is complementary to Russia's treaties with each of these States individually, and strengthens the Soviet influence in the border States of Southwestern Asia and Asia Minor.

TURKEY AND THE NEAR EAST

Turkey's Adoption of the Arabic Alphabet

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IT will perhaps turn out to be the case that among all the changes which the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, under the leadership of President Mustapha Kemal Pasha, Ismet Pasha and their associates, has made to the present time, that one which is of most far-reaching and lasting importance, is the resolution to proceed as rapidly as possible toward the adoption of the Latin alphabet.

While this move is an innovation for Turkey, it has been talked of for at least seventy-five years. Many arguments have been presented in its favor, among which the principal ones are that the Latin alphabet is better adapted for expressing the sounds of the Turkish language than is the Arabic alphabet, and that the use of the Latin letters will make the learning of the Turkish language far easier for the peoples of the Western world, not to speak of the Turks themselves.

Something like 90 per cent. of the Turks of the world have written their existing literature with Arabic characters. That alphabet writes mainly consonants, leaving vowels either to be guessed or to be indicated incompletely by diacritical marks. Such a system suits the Semitic languages fairly well, since most of their words contain three consonants, and vowel modifications can be indicated with comparative ease. The Turkish languages, on the other hand, have sprung from a monosyllabic foundation, and in the development of grammatical forms have given great importance to vowel sounds. An alphabet which regularly expresses vowels can represent these languages much more satisfactorily.

The adoption of the Arabic alphabet coincided with the acceptance of the Mohammedan religion. In this connection arise the principal objections to the change that has just been made. Coming into direct contact with Persians and Arabs, the Turks at once established literary connections with the entire Mohammedan civilization. Possessing at the outset the limited vocabulary of a desert people, they enriched it by the addition of large numbers of Arabic and Persian words. While nowadays the Ottoman Turks desire to eliminate borrowed words as far as possible, they are obliged to retain a vast number, such, for instance, as large groups connected with religion, law and *belles-*